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SUBJECT: AMLO'S THIRD ACT: NON-VIOLENCE AND THE MIDDLE
CLASS TAKE CENTER STAGE

REF: MEXICO 2408

Summary

11. (U) As the campaign season enters its final fifty days, Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) prepares to shift his strategy into high gear. After fumbling through March and April, AMLO now finds himself in second place in most polls and looks to revise his strategy to focus on a message of non-violence and themes of interest to Mexico's middle-class. In addition to reformatting his message on issues like employment and security, AMLO will also seek a change of scenery - holding events in large urban areas instead of poor, isolated municipalities. AMLO will also surround himself with new advisors, further gutting Mexico City's cabinet. Although he has stated publicly that there is no need to change the strategy in light of his new position in the polls, the changes come none too soon if he hopes to regain his lead. The only obstacle left may be his own words. End Summary.

Back in the City

12. (U) With less than fifty days left before Mexican voters head to the polls, AMLO is preparing to implement the final stage of his campaign strategy - a shift that is actually a return to some of the strategies that have worked for him in the past. Starting in June, AMLO will leave the comfortable confines of Mexico's poorer, more isolated municipalities and return to large-scale urban events - concentrating principally on the country's 32 capital cities, including Mexico City, which will be his final campaign stop before the elections. The large-scale urban events will provide the campaign with more media coverage. AMLO will also increase his media spending and outreach in an effort to counter the negative National Action Party (PAN) ads that have hurt him over the last three months. Concentrating primarily on television, AMLO has already begun to expand his media exposure, agreeing to interviews on numerous Mexican talk shows, including the popular Televisa show hosted by Victor Trujillo and TV Azteca's Animal Nocturno. AMLO continues to complain that he does not have the resources to fight ad for ad and compete in the "dirty war" launched by the PAN's Felipe Calderon. AMLO hopes the increased media appearances and larger, more accessible urban events will help deliver his reformatted platform to middle-class voters, voters he lost to Calderon between March and April.

Themes that Matter

13. (U) As reported earlier (reftel), AMLO hopes to make up ground lost to Calderon by refocusing his campaign on themes that appeal to middle-class and young voters, who represent the majority of Mexico's independent "swing" voters. Sources inside the campaign have told us AMLO will return to concentrating on issues such as jobs, crime, foreign policy, education, and macroeconomic stability. Over the last two

weeks AMLO has participated in two Consulting Council for an Alternative Project for the Nation fora, announcing his six foreign policy objectives and laying out his general position on education. Organized by campaign advisor Porfirio Munoz Ledo, more events like these are expected in the future.

¶4. (U) In addition to concentrating more on the issues, AMLO will also be trying to project an image of moderation and victimization by unscrupulous opponents. This served him well in last year's desafuero process, eventually leading to the government dropping the charges against him. He has warned of the electoral fraud his opponents are allegedly perpetrating. This shift in message has something to do with the successful PAN advertisements suggesting AMLO is a dangerous leftist but it also reflects AMLO's need to distance himself from recent violent union strikes and a bloody confrontation between police and demonstrators in San Salvador Atenco. At a recent campaign event, AMLO assured the crowd that only through peaceful and electoral means can Mexico change - he said he did not agree with the use of force, no matter the reasons. He insisted that his campaign has no relationship with Subcomandante Marcos, said the PRD would continue to fight through electoral means, and insisted that the solution to the country's conflicts was dialogue, negotiation, and consensus. He denied accusations that he was polarizing the country, arguing instead that the only thing polarizing the people is the economic inequalities perpetuated by President Fox and preceding Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) administrations. AMLO also recently asked supporters to be on the lookout for electoral fraud, specifically the use of government funds to sway votes or outright vote buying.

Campaign Musical Chairs

MEXICO 00002702 002 OF 002

¶5. (U) As in his previous strategy shifts, the campaign's new direction will also require new blood. AMLO recently called on a number of old allies from the Mexico City government to help. The new members include:

- Secretary of Urban Development and Housing Laura Itzel Castillo;
- Secretary of Health Asa Cristina Laurell;
- Secretary of Transportation and Roadways Francisco Garduno;
- Citizen Attention Director Leticia Ramirez; and
- Secretary of Environment Claudia Sheinbaum

Changes have already begun to take shape. Socorro Diaz, federal deputy and Citizens Network Coordinator, has been relieved of her duties and will be replaced by PRD National President Leonel Cota. Cota will be responsible for coordinating activities in the states of Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California, Baja California Sur, and Colima. Itzel Castillo will help coordinate activities in Oaxaca, Garduno in Hidalgo, Laurel in Chiapas, and Ramirez in Tlaxcala.

¶6. (SBU) One person whose job appears safe is foreign policy advisor Dr. Jose Maria Perez Gay. Rumors were heard that both Porfirio Munoz Ledo and Citizens Network Coordinator Manuel Camacho Solis were gunning for Perez Gay's position, using his frailty and lack of English as their main arguments. According to separate PRD contacts, Perez Gay's role as foreign policy guru is perfectly secure for now. These contacts agreed that Munoz Ledo is not a good fit considering AMLO's foreign policy objectives and Munoz Ledo's outsized personality. They both also confirmed that whatever problems existed between Camacho Solis and Perez Gay were now resolved and that Perez Gay's close personal relationship with AMLO will keep him in place.

Comment

17. (SBU) The campaign strategy shift represents AMLO's hope to regain the front-runner position. The task is a difficult one, especially since AMLO's biggest obstacle is often his own mouth. After weeks of keeping his promise to not mention Fox in any of his speeches in order to avoid further verbal confrontations, AMLO could not resist calling Fox a puppet of the U.S. and a man of straw for his allegedly weak reaction to U.S. plans to send the National Guard to the border. This had echoes of Chavez calling Fox a puppy of the U.S., and it is only a matter of time before the Calderon campaign tries to capitalize on the gaffe. End Comment.

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